



## TIME TO UPDATE YOUR SYSTEM'S...

Douglas R. Smorol | Circuit Rider II

Can you guess? That would be your Vulnerability Assessment and Emergency Response Plan (VA / ERP). Can you believe it; we just passed the thirteenth anniversary of 9/11. That means for most of you, your VA is eleven (11) or twelve (12) years old. September 11th, 2001, changed our world forever. We no longer live our lives as if no one would dare to threaten us in our homeland. In response to that threat, our leadership provided us with some tools to recognize our weaknesses and prepare a response. Those tools are the Vulnerability Assessment and Emergency Response Plans.

A lot has happened in the last decade and many things have changed. Maybe you erected that fence around your wellhead or changed the way you receive and store chemicals. By updating these documents today, you may have different answers to the fifty (50) or so questions that make up the bulk of your VA. For most of you, there will be personnel changes to record. Mayors, supervisors, and boards change like the wind. Make sure your contact information is accurate and up-to-date. Suppliers also come and go, most have websites now, even e-mail addresses. Your equipment may have changed due to an upgrade or project. This would require listing different suppliers or spare parts.

Many of you that live in rural counties did not have one-call systems at that time (911 / 811). Perhaps your local police force has been replaced by County Sherriff or State Police coverage. Most VA's and ERP's have extensive contact information as well as chain of command information that will have to be updated.

You may or may not like the format of the existing ERP and would like to either simplify it or perhaps make it more detailed. In the years following 9/11, we actually had the chance to see first-hand the different formats utilized by different sized systems. Some were very good and some not so good. Remember, if the ERP resembles a dictionary, are you going to take the time to use it? Is your ERP accessible to those that may need it? Do you have enough copies for all your staff? You may have a good ERP now but it doesn't hurt to take a look at it now and then and make improvements.

Recently we have been asked to assist several communities in updating these documents at the request of the funding agencies that require the systems to maintain them. After the Vulnerability Assessment and Emergency Response Plans are updated, the system is required to certify in writing that the documents

exist and have been updated. Remember that these are secure documents and are meant for system personnel only. The VA is a blueprint that outlines the vulnerabilities of your system.

If you need assistance in creating or updating your Vulnerability Assessment or Emergency Response Plan, please call the New York Rural Water Association at 888-697-8725 or visit our website at [www.nyruralwater.org](http://www.nyruralwater.org). Remember that it is our job to assist you in delivering "Quality on Tap". 💧💧